

REPLY TO OFFICE ACTION DATED 5/13/2003

SERIAL NO: 09/834,325  
DOCKET NO: 199-0044US

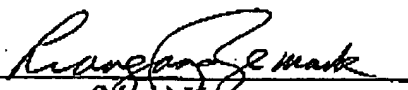
directs to a camera unit. But these three apparatuses: the main unit, the docking station and the camera are three *modules* of a modular video conferencing system. One of the inventive aspects of the current application is that a unitary video conferencing system can be broken into at least three independently upgradeable/exchangeable modules along functional lines. (Specification, Page 2.) It is true that each module is independent from the other two modules in that each module may be replaced by another module of same kind, or more than one module of the same kind can be combined with other two. But at least one of the three types of modules must be present to form a complete and working video conferencing system. Each module on itself without the other two does not work for its intended purpose. A docking station alone is not useful. A camera unit is not useful without a docking station and a main unit. (The camera unit may still be used as a general purpose camera. Or the camera unit may similar be used as a stepping stone. But neither utility is an intended utility of the camera unit, nor is it claimed.)

The Applicants submit that the three modules do not have utilities either by themselves or in other and different relationships. Therefore, one of the criteria of MPEP 806.05(c), as quoted by the Examiner: "(B) the subcombination can be shown to have utility either by itself or in other and different relations" is not satisfied. Therefore, the inventions are not distinct and the restriction is not proper.

### CONCLUSIONS

Reconsideration of the restriction requirement in light of the above remarks and allowance of all pending claims are respectfully requested. If, after considering this reply, the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would be beneficial towards advancing this case to allowance, the Examiner is strongly encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney at the number listed.

6/13/2003  
Date

  
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